

Regional Road Maintenance Endangered Species Act Program Guidelines

By Roy Harris, Maintenance and Operations Supervisor, City of Everett

There is a lot of interest in the Regional Road Maintenance Endangered Species Act Program Guidelines. “What is this program,” and “How was it developed” seem to be the two questions that are reoccurring.

In May 1999, the Puget Sound Chinook salmon was listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). In December 1999, the bull trout was also listed as “threatened” in the Puget Sound region. In response to these listings, local governments in the Puget Sound area formed a coalition known as the Tri-County ESA Response Effort, with the objective of responding to the listings by implementing programs to aid in the conservation of listed species. Road Maintenance is one of these program areas.

The Tri-County Group, now known as the Regional Road Maintenance Technical Working Group, developed these ESA Program Guidelines in order to achieve conservation outcomes when doing road maintenance work. The Regional Road Maintenance Technical Working Group is a team of road maintenance managers and technical staff from local agencies. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) worked with the regional group to ensure that the proposed program appropriately addresses conservation issues. Other regulatory authorities, as well as Puget Sound area tribes, environmental interest groups, and business groups, also provided input and assistance.

These guidelines were formally transmitted to NMFS and USFWS in December 2000. These guidelines are intended to serve as a model program that, if approved, local jurisdictions could adopt and implement in order to qualify for a take limit under the ESA 4(d) rule for threatened salmonids. There are three parts to the Regional Road Maintenance ESA Program Guidelines:

- Part 1, is the basic model program consisting of ten program elements. They are: (1) Regional Forum, (2) Program Review and Approval, (3) BMP's and Conservation Outcomes, (4) Training, (5) Compliance Monitoring, (6) Scientific Research, (7) Adaptive Management, (8) Emergency Response, (9) Regional Programmatic Biological Assessments, and (10) Bi-annual Reports. Implementation of each of the ten program elements is required for a local agency to obtain 4(d) coverage.
- Part 2, contains detailed best management practices (BMPs) for road maintenance crews, supervisors, environmental support staff, engineering design personnel and managers.
- Part 3 is an individual agency application for 4(d) coverage under the model program. Part 3, known as the “Plug and Play” element of the program, allows local jurisdictions to “plug” into the model program (Parts 1 and 2) to receive 4(d)

coverage. Part 3 is a document which demonstrates how a specific jurisdiction will comply with the ten program elements contained in Part 1.

Detailed information about how the program works is contained in Part 1 of these guidelines. The process for individual agency program review and approval for 4(d) coverage is contained in Program Element 2 of Part 1.

The Guidelines can be downloaded from:

<http://www.metrokc.gov/roadcon/bmp/pdfguide.htm>

Program Element 4: Training

Training is one of the most critical elements of the Regional Program. Training questions have been a hot topic for people evaluating how to provide training for their staff.

“What, if any, training is available” is the question most often asked. Training efforts will initially focus on the BMPs, assuring that crewmembers, supervisors, engineers, and biologists involved in road maintenance work have or will receive adequate training to appropriately and effectively implement BMPs. New employees will be trained in program elements in areas for which they are responsible.

The two goals of training are to ensure workers, technical staff, and decision makers (1) understand the Regional Road Maintenance ESA Program, and (2) are aware of their roles and responsibilities in terms of field work, technical support, permits, and documentation. Training will be conducted with an adaptive management philosophy, with future needs addressed as questions and issues arise during program implementation.

The purpose of the training program is to:

- Provide training to Road Maintenance personnel involved with making decisions, designing, constructing, and/or maintaining facilities impacted by the ESA.
- Develop and provide a comprehensive training curriculum.
- Meet the various “Regional” members training needs.
- Training will adapt to changing technologies, training methods, and feedback from trainees.
- Include oversight techniques to evaluate the effectiveness of the training.
- Keep records of staff attending training courses.
- Make training available to private contractors.
- Provide consistent training courses to Regional Program members and staff.

WSDOT’s Highways and Local Programs Service Center administers a statewide transportation management, engineering, operations, and road maintenance training program through it’s Washington State Technology Transfer Center (WST2). This Regional Road Maintenance ESA training will be folded into their existing training program. Training will be accomplished with both classroom training and hands-on field application sessions. An important part of the training program will be a train-the-trainer

component where individuals identified by the local agency will be trained to present the program to their road maintenance personnel.

Training Courses & Topics Covered

Ten major courses will be developed and delivered to WST2 by June 30, 2001. Each agency's training program will require key staff to attend the appropriate courses in basic ESA, BMP's, biological and environmental, design, monitoring and oversight, permitting and train-the-trainer sessions.

The University of Washington's Civil and Environmental Engineering Department, under the direction of Bill Rogers and Jim McManus, is developing the curriculum. As the development of the curriculum moves toward completion we will review the contents with you in future WST2 publications.

Want More Information?

If you would like to talk with someone about this program, contact one of these individuals:

Roy Harris, City of Everett, (425) 257-8893

Kathy Brown, King County, ((206) 296-8138

John Schnaderbeck, Pierce County, (253) 798-6295

For training questions call Laurel Gray, WST2 Training Coordinator, (360) 705-73655.